



Gifted

Since the last time you heard from us, the HKF family has lost two friends. Our beloved teacher Ram Dass, who was part of starting this project in 1973, died on December 22. Around the same



time we heard about the death of our friend Alan, who volunteered with HKF in 2002 while he was on parole.

Ram Dass was a well-known author, speaker, and teacher whose death made headlines in national news. We appreciate Ram Dass for his role in starting the Prison-Ashram Project (now mostly known as Human Kindness Foundation) and for the many ways he inspired our personal journeys. Sita says that reading his famous book *Be Here Now* was her first introduction to spiritual life. It gave her a strong sense of coming home. Since then she has read thousands of letters from people who say they have the same feeling when they read *We're All Doing Time*. See page 8 for Sita's note about the most recent practice Ram Dass shared: the mantra "I am loving awareness."

Alan's death did not make headlines, but his life was no less important. Ram Dass was with us from the beginning, but what would this project be without the people who are willing to request our books, put them into practice, and change their lives? Alan overcame addiction and then shared his experience by working as an addiction-recovery counselor. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, **"Not everybody can be famous but everybody can be great, because greatness is determined by service."**

You'll find more news—some travel, new book offerings—in the pages of this newsletter. We hope that you'll find something to uplift and inspire you. Wherever you are, your greatness is needed and we hope you are sharing it.

Ron Finley grew up in a South Central Los Angeles neighborhood where no fresh healthy food was available without driving 45 minutes or more.

From *ronfinley.com*: "In 2010, he set out to fix the problem. Outside his front door, that is. Ron planted vegetables in the curbside dirt strip next to his home. And quietly, carefully, tenderly started a revolution. 'I wanted a carrot without toxic ingredients I didn't know how to spell,' says Ron."

Cited for "gardening without a permit," Ron had to push hard for his right to grow food in his community. Since that beginning, Ron has become an inspiration for people all over the country who want to grow food together and make their communities stronger and healthier. His TED Talk has been viewed nearly a million times on YouTube and he has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Vogue Magazine*, *NBC Los Angeles*, and many other media outlets.

Sita and Catherine met Ron at "Summit LA19," a conference in Los Angeles where we were invited to speak about Transformational Love. Ron told us about meeting a man who had studied Ron's **"Gangsta Gardener"** movement while in prison. The man told Ron that when he was asked where he wanted to make a parole plan, he said **"Send me to my old neighborhood. I want to fix what I f**ked up."**

Ron asked us to send you his respect. He knows you have great gifts to share.



Bryan Stevenson spoke recently in Davidson, North Carolina, and I happily drove across the state to hear his inspiring talk. Stevenson has spent decades defending people with death sentences and working to change the laws and the sentencing patterns that are rooted in this country's racist history.

Bryan Stevenson reminded us that if we want to change the world, we need to protect our hope. **"Hopelessness is the enemy of justice,"** he said. He believes that there's something better waiting for our society if we do the hard work of truth and reconciliation, and he points to South Africa as an example that can inform and inspire us. HKF board member Chris Canfield recently traveled to South Africa and shares these thoughts about the history that country is courageously working to heal.

—Catherine



Reflections from South Africa: Nelson Mandela leads his country toward truth and reconciliation

By Chris Canfield,
Human Kindness
Foundation Board
of Directors

I was fortunate recently to take a trip to South Africa. Like so

many of us, I'd heard about and imagined the world of this exotic country for decades. My father even lived there in his last years. But I never visited.

Ask most people what comes to mind when South Africa is mentioned and you are likely to hear "Nelson Mandela" and "apartheid." I was curious to better understand this man's life and the system of racial separation and oppression that he helped overturn. I'd read some books about the country but nothing really prepared me for experiencing South Africa's important historic sites.

In Soweto, the township outside Johannesburg set aside for the majority blacks by the white government during apartheid, we saw the still deplorable conditions so many of the 1.3 million residents of that area live in. Nelson Mandela and friends like Bishop Desmond Tutu lived there. In Mandela's house, now a museum, bullet holes are visible in the walls from police shooting at the house to try to scare the family away from their activism against racist policies.

I learned more about Mandela's life at the Apartheid Museum in the center of Johannesburg. Apartheid was a strategy by the minority whites in the country (primarily the Afrikaans) to maintain pow-

er and control. It was a set of laws drawn up in the late 1940s mandating the separation of races in all things. Even peaceful protests against the system were met with violence and years of imprisonment. As a leader of the resistance movement, which eventually included a military wing, Nelson Mandela was especially targeted by the police. In 1962 he was arrested and in 1964, along with seven collaborators, given a life sentence.

It was in prison that Nelson Mandela, the South African resistance leader, seems to have become Nelson Mandela, the world wisdom teacher. His years in prison were brutal at times. In the early years, he was allowed only one visit and two letters per year. Later, he and his fellow political prisoners took it upon themselves to continue their education, developing lectures on topics from economics and law to history and languages. These "classes" occurred during long hours in the quarry where they broke up rocks with hammers.

Mandela made an effort to get to know his white captors, including their language, Afrikaans. He also undertook a discipline of personal spiritual growth, incorporating meditation with his study and writing. A number of times, as international pressure on South African leaders grew, Mandela was offered release on conditions that he renounce the goals and methods of

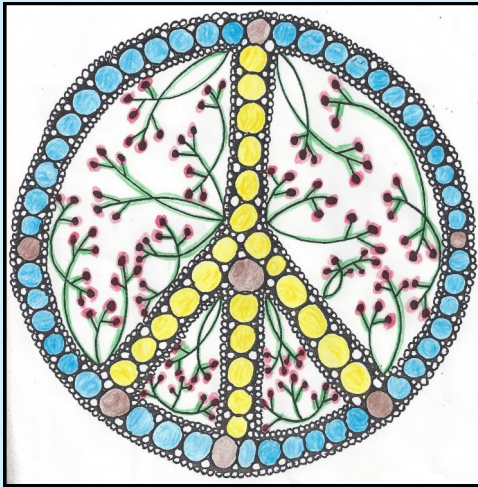
I am fundamentally an optimist. ... Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat and death.

—Nelson Mandela

those resisting apartheid. He refused.

In the later years of his incarceration, when Mandela was in his late 60s, and as worldwide support for him became more vocal, his captors moved him to more agreeable housing and tended to his various health concerns, including tuberculosis. On February 11, 1990, after 27 years of captivity, Nelson Mandela was given unconditional release. In May 1994, he was elected President of South Africa.

In the years to follow he helped form a new democratic government, wrote a new constitution, and began the deeper process of healing among the people of his country. The wisdom he had developed while in prison became evident in his process for "truth and reconciliation." The truth part was to reveal to all the often hidden horrors of the apartheid years. Reconciliation was focused on rehabilitating those who had violated fundamental human rights by participat-



ing in apartheid. Together the two parts aim at restoration rather than retribution—restoring peace instead of getting revenge.

The experience of the museum was jolting and unrelenting. On entering, visitors are randomly assigned status either as "white" or "non-white," to experience being treated differently based on race. We saw filmed testimony from people who lived through atrocities committed in the name of the apartheid order. We were immersed in a challenging world not unlike what many of us have seen in our own country.

Outside, in the sunlight, my wife and I saw an older white man sitting on a bench, his eyes wet with tears. We gave him his space to grieve. But a few moments later we encountered him again, standing nearby. My wife Kate offered the large man a hug, at which point he began sobbing, hunched over her shoulder. He kept asking "why!? why!?" We could only hug and share the same unanswerable question.

Few parts of the world have been untouched by the cruelty of systems that separate us and cause us to hate and try to suppress the "others" in our lives. Luckily, the Nelson Mandelas of the world have learned to mine that heavy coal, even while imprisoned, and turn it into bright diamonds of wisdom for us all.

Nelson Mandela writes to his wife

... the cell is an ideal place to learn

to know yourself, to search realistically and regularly the process of your own mind and feelings. In judging our progress as individuals we tend to concentrate on external factors such as one's social position, influence and popularity, wealth and standard of education. These are, of course, important in measuring one's success in material matters and it is perfectly understandable if many people exert themselves mainly to achieve all these. But internal factors may be even more crucial in assessing one's development as a human being. Honesty, sincerity, simplicity, humility, pure generosity, absence of vanity, readiness to serve others—qualities which are within easy reach of every soul—are the foundation of one's spiritual life. Development in matters of this nature is inconceivable without serious introspection, without knowing yourself, your weaknesses and mistakes. At least, if for nothing else, the cell gives you the opportunity to look daily into your entire conduct, to overcome the bad and develop whatever is good in you. Regular meditation, say about 15 minutes a day before you turn in, can be very fruitful in this regard. You may find it difficult at first ..., but the 10th attempt may yield rich rewards. Never forget that **a saint is a sinner who keeps on trying**.

From a letter to Winnie Mandela, written in Kroonstad Prison, dated 1 February 1975



Eckhart Tolle is a contemporary spiritual teacher who is not aligned with any particular religion or tradition. He ... imparts a simple yet profound message:

There is a way out of suffering and into peace.

Cover endorsement. "The Power of Now"

**ECKHART
TOLLE**

The #1 New York Times bestselling author of
The Power of Now

**A NEW
EARTH**

Awakening to Your
Life's Purpose

10TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION
with a new preface by the author

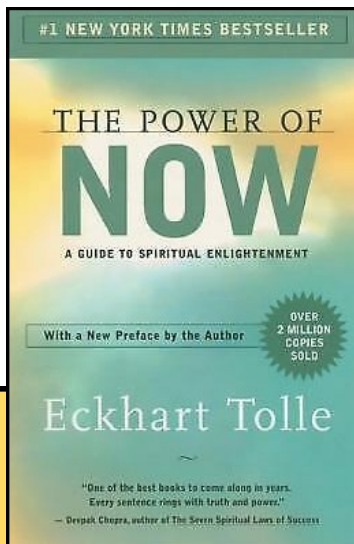
Now Available Free!

Eckhart Tolle's transformative books

The Power of Now and *A New Earth*

are now available free to people who are incarcerated. These books are donated by The Eckhart Tolle Foundation.

If you'd like these paperback books, please write to us with your name and full address, including any numbers or location information your facility requires. It could take up to 5 weeks for your books to arrive, so if you're at a short-term address please wait to request the books at your next address. Write to: Tolle books offer, Human Kindness Foundation, PO Box 61619, Durham NC 27715.



Matt Engler was released from prison in 2019 and is now teaching yoga and meditation classes with Transformation Yoga Project in Pennsylvania. This excerpt is from an interview in *Yoga International*.

What impact did your practice have on your day-to-day life in prison?

My daily practice changed every degree of my life in prison. ...it was probably two years after I began practicing. ... The biggest piece of the puzzle was being present—that changed everything for me. **And it was Eckhart Tolle's book *The Power of Now* that kind of glued it all together.** Things only happen in the present?! Nothing happens in the past?! Nothing happens in the future?!

This concept was like a bomb for me and revolutionized the way I thought. Eventually, I learned my past didn't have to affect my present view of the world.... My whole world changed. I realized I had choices—everything is a choice, and choices are real freedom.



The Eckhart Tolle Foundation
inspires spiritual awakening
by sharing
Eckhart's
teachings

with those who may not have access. Human Kindness Foundation is thrilled to partner with The Eckhart Tolle Foundation to make these books available to people in prison or jail.



Eckhart Tolle

You do not need to wait for the world to become sane, or for somebody else to become conscious, before you can be enlightened. —Eckhart Tolle

Sita & Gina's Pilgrimage

From Sita Lozoff

My beloved friends,

I recently celebrated my 75th birthday—three quarters of a century!! Five years ago, a health advisor whom I trust told me that I could have 25 more GOOD years of life if I were able to do some very long distance walking, and it has taken me these five years to find the perfect plan to take his advice.

Saint Francis has inspired me throughout my adult life because of his love and compassion for all beings. I'm now planning to walk a route in Italy called "Saint Francis Way." It goes from Citta to Assisi, Italy, where our beloved Saint Francis lived 800 years ago, and then follows his path into the mountains. In all, I'll be walking about 125 miles. I'm hoping you will join me in spirit on this pilgrimage by keeping me in your heart and in your prayers. You can be sure I'll keep you all in my heart and prayers as well!

My dear friend Gina DeVine, who is a member of the HKF Board of Directors, and I are scheduled to walk for 3 weeks in May. Let's start imagining the beauty of the woods and the rolling hills that Saint Francis traveled so long ago. Gina and I will be walking with loving awareness and dedicating our journey to our HKF family.

My calling this lifetime is caring about people in prison. After more than 45 years, I still get up each morning eager to share loving energy with you. You are my *Why* for making this journey. I hope my advisor is right and this 125-mile pilgrimage gives me many more good years to be with you through Human Kindness Foundation.

So thanks for sharing my adventure and for keeping me in your hearts and your prayers!

I love you, Sita

And, of course, I'd love to see my dear little grandson become a dear, kind man.



From Gina DeVine

Sita and I are counting the days until our walk along the Way of Saint Francis of Assisi. Our departure date can't come soon enough!

I am so thrilled and honored to share this experience with my long-time friend, Sita. We'll spend every day walking to our next destination, stopping to rest, seeing local towns, chapels, people, and probably

sharing some delicious local food.

This will be my sixth annual pilgrimage. The first year I walked El Camino in Spain, a traditional path used for hundreds of years. As I understood the lore, that walk was made by **real** Pilgrims. I felt sheepish and unworthy to think of joining so many saintly folks! What soon became clear on that first Camino was that any and all who walk such a journey are known as Pilgrims, without expectation or judgement.

Pilgrim, by definition, means "person on a journey to a holy place." What unfolded as I walked, and has been a great source of joy and gratitude ever since, is the realization that we are all Pilgrims.

Consider that there is no one defined geographic or spiritual path required. If you are "walking your spiritual path" on your way to a holy place of inner peace, you are a pilgrim with me and Sita.

So take a walk ... in the woods, in the yard, in your mind. Embrace the holiness of the beauty outside and the holiness of your beautiful heart and soul. Celebrate your inner Pilgrim!

Love, Gina



This is Sita and her grandson Joey in the HKF office

Letters

Dear Human Kindness Foundation,

My name is D and I'm a 25 year old addict in jail after breaking a window in order to "turn myself in" because I couldn't stand how my life had become with meth and drinking.

I want to thank your organization for all that it does. These last 6 months have opened a lot of inner doors—some painful and some enlightening. And I don't think I would have been able to overcome my self hatred without some of the books you guys have sent.

My current battle is where do I go from here?

I have two beautiful sons ages 3 and 4. The older one I have not met and the younger one I only knew for a few months before abandoning him with my parents in order to relapse. I had a lot of self hate for that decision, but over time I've realized I was only 6 months sober and was in no shape to take on a toddler by myself and at least he was somewhere safe with my folks when I re-

lapsed. So now that I've made an uneasy peace with that, the question remains—do I get up and try again or quit wasting everybody's time and just stay gone so they can move forward to hopefully something better? I've been stuck at this crossroads and am not sure what to do. Any advice?

Love, D

Dear D,

Thank you so much for your candid and heartfelt letter. There is no doubt that drugs can create unmanageable life situations for us, and it's good that you are realizing this now, at your young age, and that the situation has not been worse.

One thing I always do when I am trying to make a decision that could effect others as well, is to take it deeply into prayer—not once, but every day. Ask your Higher Power to help you bring the highest and best good to all involved and pray with your whole heart, without thought for your own needs, but more for needs of others. And at the right time, it may become obvious what to do.

But one thing is for sure, you have to take every step at your disposal to live a clean and sober life, and that will definitely require a community of recovery around you, such as AA or NA. Simply going back to old ways of living without the support that a recovery community will bring into your life is not a road worth taking because your chances of success are drastically reduced.

There is help out there for you and once your recovery is stable, you can also become a beacon of hope to another who is as lost as you once were. If your family knows that you are taking your recovery seriously and it is now the #1 priority in your life, they might understand and maybe even support your efforts.

You are worth it, and spirit has a plan for your life. You don't have to see the whole staircase, you just have to take the first step, and for you, that step is learning to live in a new way, trusting in your Higher Power and keeping your prayer steady that you want the highest and best good for all involved.

We are here for you, and we hope our

books help to steady your feet and ease your fears. It's a long journey, but it is so worth it. You are so worth it!!

Love from your HKF family, Donna



Dear Catherine & the HKF family,

I was molested from the time that I was 7 until I was 11 years old. The man was a family friend, like an uncle to me, and he told me not to tell or my family would be hurt.

Now I also have the crime of child molestation, and no, there is no excuse for what I have done, and I'm not trying to make none. I have no reason for doing what I have done. I feel dirty and that my life isn't worth nothing. I still have nightmares most nights and wake up in a cold sweat. I'm trying a lot of soul searching, but I'm truly lost, and I can't find my way around my past.

As for the HKF, I have much love for all of you and for the help that you try to send to everyone. I really do respect Sita for all she has done over the years to try to help everyone, and I am very sorry for her loss of Bo.

Please keep sending me any and all material. Hopefully I can find parts of my life that I've lost. And please connect me with Neem Karoli Baba too.

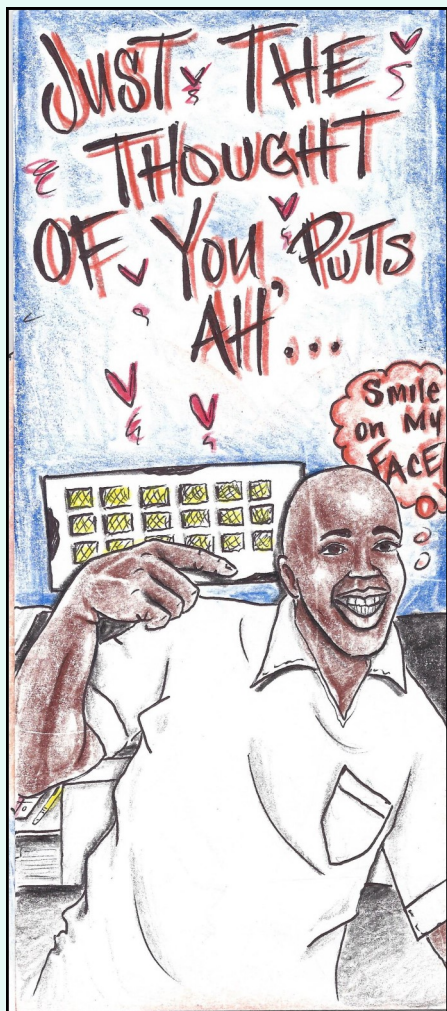
With peace and love, L

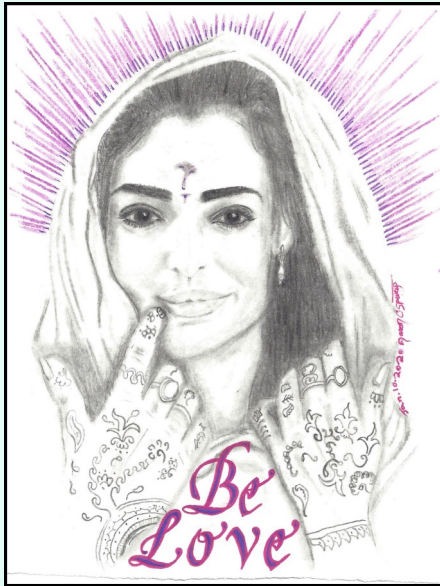
Dear L,

Thank you for having the courage to write to us here at HKF. I'm sorry you are feeling so down and hopeless.

I'm sending some books. I know a book doesn't sound like enough help for the deep wounds you talked about in this letter. But many, many people have told us that those same books helped when they were feeling as hopeless as you are feeling. Please do your best to be open to the help that is there.

Thank you for still having love for us at HKF, even in this phase of feeling so bad yourself. You mention feeling dirty and that your life is worth nothing and hating yourself. I really am sorry you're hurting that badly. The things that happened to you when you were 7 to 11 years old should not have happened. Somebody should have protected you, and nobody did, and that is a tragedy. Those wounds are real and deep, still





giving you nightmares all these years later. We don't take that lightly, L. It hurts. A lot.

You asked me to connect you with Neem Karoli Baba. He died in 1973. Many believe he is still with us, just without human form. Here are a couple of quotes from him:

"When you remember me I come to you." "Love everyone, serve everyone, and remember God."

Neem Karoli Baba encouraged people to follow the teachings of Christ, the Buddha, and others who teach love. There is a picture of him on page 120 of *We're All Doing Time*.

Bo and Neem Karoli Baba, if they were speaking into your ear right now, would tell you this: You are a child of God. You are loved, and you are worth that love. Just like the lepers who thought they were "unclean" until Jesus healed them, you can be healed. You, L, are a human being, a worthy and lovable child of God.

Please read that as many times as it takes. It is the truth, no matter how hard it is to believe when you have harmed another person. It is the truth, told by countless gurus, saints, prophets and sages throughout the ages. Most of us (like me) are still working on taking that truth all the way in for ourselves,

even if we can see it clearly for others. Start where you are. If all you can do right now is read that paragraph again, then that's enough. Keep doing that.

Peace & blessings, Catherine
Dear Human Kindness Foundation,



A fellow inmate showed me the book *We're All Doing Time*. It's amazing, and I would love to receive my own copy so I could use it as a tool on my spiritual journey. I have wanted to learn more on my spiritual path for many years now, but living on the streets and ingesting copious amounts of heroin and meth had halted my desire to learn. If anything, my incarceration is a blessing in disguise.

I worry constantly about my 16 year old daughter following in my footsteps, but I cannot do anything to mend our broken relationship from in here except send love to her mentally. I felt foolish about this, but when browsing through *We're All Doing Time* I saw that this can be a meditation practice! Awesome! I want to do my part to become a more spiritual being and change what I can about myself in order to make the world a better place.

I have no family or friends on the outside other than my daughter, and it's very hard in here, but after reading how we're all connected, I no longer feel so alone, and I'm excited to get to know myself better.

Love, J

Dear J,

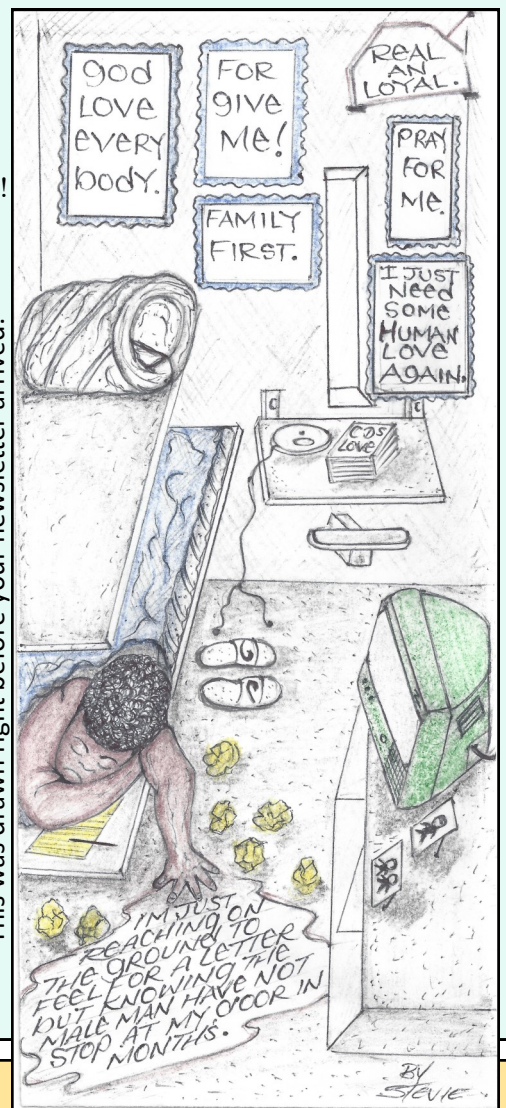
Thank you for your heartfelt letter. We can feel your desire and sincerity in wanting to change your life for the better and to heal your relationship with your precious daughter.

In order for you to effectively beat the tendency toward addiction, you really do need to refocus your energy and attention toward higher levels of consciousness, and Bo's books are the perfect place to start! Practice will be the next focus, and

it is essential—a desire to change can't get you there without practice. Desire is like the fuel in a car, but the car can't go anywhere without someone stepping on the gas. That is practice!! I'm talking about meditation, yoga, service to others, reading and study, asking for guidance every day, etc.

Our spiritual journeys have an unlimited amount of fuel for our use, but it can't work without our continued effort. The beauty is, the more you give it, the more it gives you. And this is available right now, right where you are. Everything you need is right here, right now. So take this time that the Universe has bestowed upon you to get on this path and stay on it. Miracles are awaiting you!!

Love, HKF



"This was drawn right before your newsletter arrived."

Many thanks to the artists: pg 1: Sarah Lomaintewa, Santee, CA; pg 2: Charles Walker, San Francisco, CA & drawing of Mandela from www.goodfreephotos.com; pg 3: Claude Dalrymple, LaGrange, KY & Andrew McIntyre, West Chester, PA; pg 4: William Wheeler Posing, Kankakee, IL; pg 5: Gary Rogers, Dillwyn, VA; pg 6: Donald Caine, Gainesville, TX; pg 7: Aaron Spivey, Asheville, NC & Stevie Morris, Soledad, CA; pg 8: Robert Reynolds, Gainesville, FL.



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I Am Loving Awareness

During the last years of his life, our dear Ram Dass gave us a new phrase to work with, just as he gave us Be Here Now decades ago. Be Here Now reminded us that the present moment is all we ever have. I Am Loving Awareness adds love to that. Not only is awareness of the present moment important, but bringing love to the present moment will make it even stronger and more precious—head to heart!

I do this mantra, and I love it. I offer it to you and hope you will love it too.

Try it and see if it connects!!

Love, Sita

Painting of Ram Dass by Robert Reynolds, Gainesville, FL